

Message Text

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ACTION SY-05

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R 301545Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3941
INFO AMCONSUL GENOA
AMCONSUL MILAN
AMCONSUL TURIN

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FOR A/SY/OPS/T AND DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY BEN H. READ

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ASEC
SUBJECT: AUTHORITY TO PURCHASE FOREIGN-MADE VEHICLE

REF: STATE 121819

1. THE SECURITY WATCH COMMITTEE OF THE EMBASSY MET ON JUNE 9, 1978 TO DISCUSS THE PURCHASE OF FOREIGN MADE VEHICLES FOR POST IN ITALY BASED ON SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS. THE FOLLOWING PERSONNEL WERE PRESENT AT THE MEETING:

DEPUTY CHIEF OF MISSION	H. ALLEN HOLMES
COUNSELOR FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS	ALLAN W. FORD
AIR ATTACHE	COL. JOSEPH M. VALENTI
ADMINISTRATIVE COUNSELOR	ROBERT M. MILLER
REGIONAL SECURITY OFFICER	ARTHUR H. BRUNETTI
ASST. REGIONAL SECURITY OFFICER	GREGORI BUJAC
GEOGRAPHER-POLITICAL	EILEEN GUERIN
DEA, REPRESENTATIVE FROM AMCONSUL MILAN	ENRICO VERDOLIN

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2. THE BASIC POINT OF DISCUSSION WAS WHETHER THE SECURITY SITUATION IN ITALY AND PARTICULARLY AT THE POSTS FROM ROME NORTH, JUSTIFIED THE PURCHASE OF FOREIGN MADE VEHICLES.

3. THE BASIC DOCUMENT CONSIDERED DURING THE DISCUSSION WAS THE "DEPARTMENT'S POLICY GOVERNING THE PROCUREMENT OF FOREIGN MADE VEHICLES FOR REASONS OF SECURITY." UNDER SECRETARY READ IN THE

REFERENCED CABLE REQUESTED THAT THE PROVISIONS OF THIS INSTRUCTION BE ADDRESSED IN EVALUATING THE REQUEST.

4. THE DETERIORATING PUBLIC SECURITY SITUATION THROUGHOUT ITALY AND THE PROLIFERATING TERRORIST THREAT IN THE COUNTRY HAVE BEEN EXTENSIVELY TREATED AND DOCUMENTED BOTH IN OFFICIAL REPORTS AND THE WORLD PRESS. THE RED BRIGADES AND AN EVER INCREASING NUMBER OF NEW TERRORIST GROUPS ARE ACTIVE AND DANGEROUS. THIS IS PARTICULARLY TRUE FROM ROME NORTH TO THE IRON TRIANGLE CITIES OF MILAN, TURIN AND GENOA.

5. THE KIDNAPPING OF ALDO MORO IN ROME, THE SHOOTING OF ASTARITA IN MILA, THE FIRST INCIDENT INVOLVING AN ATTACK ON AN ITALIAN REPRESENTATIVE OF AN AMERICAN MULTINATIONAL, THE ARSON ATTACK AGAINST HONEYWELL IN THE SAME CITY, THE NUMEROUS "KNEE-CAPPINGS" AND ASSASSINATIONS IN THE NORTH ARE ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE EXISTING CLIMATE IN THE COUNTRY.

6. AMERICANS HAVE NOT YET BEEN THE TARGETS OF THE RED BRIGADES OR OTHER TERRORIST FORMATIONS. HOWEVER, COMMUNIQUEES ISSUED BY THE RED BRIGADES DURING AND SUBSEQUENT TO MORO'S KIDNAPPING REFLECT A DIRECTIONAL SHIFT IN THEIR ATTACKS ON THE MULTINATIONALS. THEY APPEAR TO BE EDGING CLOSER TO OPENLY AND DIRECTLY IDENTIFYING THESE MULTINATIONS WITH THEIR PARENT ORGANIZATIONS AND THEIR COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN. IN MANY CASES THIS MEANS THE UNITED STATES AND THE FEDERAL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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REPUBLIC OF GERMANY. THEY HAVE SO STATED IN THEIR WRITINGS. SHOULD THE VIOLENCE BE SHIFTED TO THE AMERICAN PERSONNEL OF MULTINATIONALS OR TO OFFICIAL AMERICAN PERSONNEL AS SURROGATE TARGETS, THE SECURITY SITUATION WOULD BECOME VERY SERIOUS.

7. THE SOUTH OF ITALY HAS BEEN SPARED THE LEVEL OF TERRORIST ACTIVITY PREVALENT IN THE NORTH. THIS MAY BE IN THE PROCESS OF CHANGING. THERE ARE CLEAR INDICATIONS THAT THE RED BRIGADES MAY TRY TO EXPAND THEIR OPERATIONS TO THE SOUTH, INCLUDING THE OFF SHORE ISLANDS. PAMPHLETS OF THE SARDINIAN GUERRILLAS LIST THEIR FUTURE TARGETS AND INCLUDE THE "U.S. BASES".

8. WITHOUT QUESTION, ITALY HAS A SERIOUS, SIGNIFICANT AND CONTINUING TERRORISM PROBLEM. IN ADDITION, DURING ONE PERIOD OR ANOTHER, PRACTICALLY EVERY MAJOR CITY IN ITALY HAS EXPERIENCED CIVIL DISORDER WHICH MADE IT IMPOSSIBLE TO CIRCULATE FREELY AND DANGEROUS IF CAUGHT IN THE VICINITY OF LARGE SCALE STREET BATTLES BETWEEN THE POLICE AND DEMONSTRATORS. THIS TYPE OF DISORDER, FREQUENT IN 1977, HAS DIMINISHED SOMEWHAT IN 1978, BUT ITS REOCCURENCE IS POSSIBLE AT ANY TIME.

9. THERE IS NO VOLATILE ANTI-AMERICAN SENTIMENT IN ITALY.

THERE ARE INDICATIONS, HOWEVER, THAT TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS ARE BEGINNING TO FOCUS MORE ON AMERICAN IDENTIFICATION WITH MULTI-NATIONALS, CREDIT INSTITUTIONS AND THE MILITARY PRESENCE.

10. THERE HAVE BEEN THREATS AGAINST THE AMBASSADOR AND THE MINISTER-COUNSELOR IN THE PAST. IN 1977 THREATS TO BOTH OFFICIALS NECESSITATED SPECIAL MEASURES AND PRECAUTIONS FOR A PERIOD OF ONE MONTH.

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FOR A/SY/OPS/T AND DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY BEN H. READ

11. NEITHER THE EMBASSY IN ROME NOR OUR CONSTITUENT POSTS ARE CONSIDERING A REDUCTION OF DEPENDENTS AND/OR EMPLOYEES AT THIS TIME. GENERALLY, THERE ARE NO RESTRICTIONS PLACED ON THE MOVEMENT OR SOCIAL ACTIVITIES OF PERSONNEL. AT TIMES OF STREET DISORDERS WE DO SUGGEST THAT OUR PEOPLE AVOID CERTAIN AREAS OR STAY AT HOME. WE HAVE AUTHORIZED FLEX TIME AT ALL OF OUR POSTS IN ORDER TO MAKE IT AS DIFFICULT AS POSSIBLE FOR ANYONE TO BE TARGETED.

12. AMERICAN EMPLOYEES HAVE NOT BEEN OFFICIALLY DISCOURAGED FROM BRINGING AMERICAN VEHICLES TO POST, BUT ABOUT 85 PERCENT OF OUR EMPLOYEES DO IN FACT OWN AND DRIVE FOREIGN MADE VEHICLES.

13. NON-AMERICAN VEHICLES OVERWHELMINGLY DOMINATE THE LOCAL SCENE IN ITALY. ITALIAN INDIGENOUS AUTOS (FIATS, ALFAS AND AUTOBIANCHI), RENAULTS AND VOLKSWAGENS ARE THE MOST COMMONLY SEEN MAKES OF VEHICLES. MOST FOREIGN MISSIONS UTILIZE FOREIGN MADE CARS. EXCEPT FOR THE EMBASSY IN ROME WHICH HAS A FEW CD

TAGGED AUTOMOBILES, ALL OTHER CONSTITUENT POST'S OFFICIAL VEHICLES ARE NOT IDENTIFIABLE AS CUH BY THEIR TAGS.

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14. AMERICAN VEHICLES ARE TOO BIG FOR THE LOCAL CITY STREETS. THEY ARE DIFFICULT TO MANEUVER. IN CASE OF EMERGENCY, THEY COULD BE TRAPPED IN THE HEAVY TRAFFIC.

15. THE OFFICIAL VEHICLES OF ALL PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AT THE CONSTITUENT POSTS, AS WELL AS THE AMBASSADOR'S VEHICLE, HAVE BEEN BODY ARMORED AND PLASTIC INSERTS HAVE BEEN INSTALLED ON ALL WINDOWS EXCEPT THE WINDSHIELD. RECENT INFORMATION RECEIVED HAS SHOWN THAT THE PLASTIC INSERTS OFFER LITTLE MEANINGFUL PROTECTION WHEN MATCHED AGAINST THE FIREPOWER BROUGHT TO BEAR BY THE TERRORISTS. THE EMBASSY HAS PAINTED MANY OF ITS OFFICIAL CARS VARIOUS PASTEL SHADES TO CIRCUMVENT THE CONSPICUOUS BLACK COLOR.

16. THE AMBASSADOR IS THE ONLY OFFICIAL AMERICAN IN ITALY WHO HAS A 24-HOUR POLICE ESCORT. THE POST CANNOT EXPECT ADDITIONAL PERMANENT POLICE ESCORTS GIVEN THE ALREADY UNDERMANNED CONDITION OF THE ITALIAN SECURITY FORCES.

17. THE ABOVE IS AN HONEST EVALUATION OF THE SECURITY POSTURE AT POSTS IN ITALY. THE TERRORISM PROBLEM IS SERIOUS AND NOT TO BE UNDEREVALUATED. WE ARE NOT IN A SIEGE SITUATION OR IN A REVOLUTIONARY STATE OF WARFARE. AMERICANS HAVE NOT BEEN THE TARGETS OF THE TERRORISTS, BUT THIS SITUATION COULD CHANGE OVERNIGHT. WE ARE NOT READY TO EVACUATE PERSONNEL. WE ARE AT A POINT WHERE WE MUST SERIOUSLY BEGIN TO TAKE VERY REASONABLE PRECAUTION TO PROTECT OUR PEOPLE. THE NAME OF THE GAME IN ITALY FOR AMERICANS IS TO MAINTAIN AS LOW A PROFILE AS POSSIBLE. DRIVING ABOUT THE STREETS IN BIG, BLACK AMERICAN CARS IS NOT THE RECOMMENDED MANNER OF ATTAINING THIS GOAL. THE VEHICLES DRAW UNDUE ATTENTION, PARTICULARLY IN THOSE CONSTITUENT POSTS OUTSIDE OF ROME. IN MILAN FOR EXAMPLE, OUR DEPUTY CHIEF OF MISSION PERSONALLY EXPERIENCED A SITUATION IN WHICH PERSONS BEAT ON THE TRUNK OF THE CONSUL GENERAL'S OFFICIAL VEHICLE HE WAS RIDING IN AND UTTERED RUDE

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REMAKRS. THE DRIVERS IN MILAN HAVE REPORTED TO THE ROS THAT ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS THEIR CARS WERE "ROCKED" BY CROWDS WHO RECOGNIZED THE OFFICIAL AMERICAN VEHICLES.

18. MOST FOREIGN MADE AUTOMOBILES ARE UNOBTRUSIVE, MANEUVERABLE AND ECONOMICAL. THEY DO NOT PRESENT AN IMMEDIATELY

ATTRACTIVE TARGET TO DEMONSTRATORS. IN SPITE OF THE ABOVE STATED FACTORS THE SECURITY WATCH COMMITTEE WAS UNANIMOUS IN ITS OPINION THAT MEASURED AGAINST THE CRITERIA SET FORTH IN THE "POLICY GOVERNING THE PROCUREMENT OF FOREIGN MADE VEHICLES FOR REASONS OF SECURITY", THE POSTS IN ITALY DO NOT QUALIFY. THE COMMITTEE WAS ALSO UNANIMOUS IN ITS OPINION THAT THE CRITERIA IN THE PAMPHLET ARE MUCH TOO RESTRICTIVE. A POST WOULD LITERALLY HAVE TO FIND ITSELF IN A STATE OF INSURRECTION OR REVOLUTION IN ORDER TO QUALIFY FOR THE PURCHASE OF A FOREIGN CAR. THE COMMITTEE FELT THAT CONDITIONS FAR LESS DRAMATIC THAN THOSE OUTLINED IN THE POLICY STATEMENT JUSTIFY THE PURCHASE AND USE OF FOREIGN MADE AUTOMOBILES IN ITALY. OTHER AGENCIES IN ITALY SUCH AS ICA, DEA AND INS HAVE LONG RECOGNIZED THIS AND PURCHASE FOREIGN MADE VEHICLES.

19. BASED ON THE REASONS OUTLINED IN THIS MEMORANDUM, WE ARE REQUESTING AUTHORITY TO PURCHASE FOREIGN MADE VEHICLES FOR USE AT OUR POSTS IN ITALY. THE NORTHERN POSTS IN PARTICULAR ARE FACED WITH A SEVERE TERRORIST THREAT AND ARE MOST IN NEED OF THESE VEHICLES. THEY COULD, HOWEVER, BE SENSIBLY USED AT ALL OF OUR POSTS FOR SECURITY REASONS. GARDNER

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